

# Professional Ethics

Professional ethics is a set of moral principles and values that guide the behavior of professionals in their respective fields. Engineering is a crucial profession that directly impacts the quality of life of individuals and society as a whole. As such, engineers are expected to adhere to a high standard of ethical conduct to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of the public. The National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) has established a Code of Ethics that all engineers are expected to follow. The Fundamental Canons of the Code of Ethics require engineers to prioritize public safety, health, and well-being while performing their professional duties. They are expected to offer their services only within their area of competence, issue truthful and objective public statements, act faithfully to employers and clients, act honestly and sincerely in their actions, and present themselves in an honorable, responsible, ethical, and lawful way.

## Section 1 Fundamental Canons

While performing their professional duties, engineers must:

1. Consider the safety, health, and well-being of the public above all else
2. Perform services only within their area of competence
3. Be truthful and objective when issuing public statements
4. Act faithful to employers and clients
5. Be honest and sincere in their actions
6. Present themselves in an honorable, responsible, ethical, and lawful way

## Section 2 Rules of Practice

While practicing in their profession, engineers must follow these Rules of Practice:

1. Notify their employer if their judgement is overruled in situations that endanger life or property
2. Only approve documents that conform with the standards
3. Never disclose facts, data, or information without the prior consent of their employer or client
4. Never allow the use of their name in business ventures with a questionably fraudulent individual or firm
5. Never help or condone unlawful practices of engineering
6. Report code violations to appropriate professionals and public authorities
7. Accept assignments only when they have the right experience or education qualifications

8. Never sign their name on plans or documents that cover subject matter out of their expertise
9. Take on assignments, assume responsibility for coordination, and sign/seal the engineering documents for an entire project
10. Be truthful in reports, statements, or testimony, and include all applicable information
11. They may share technical opinions with the public
12. Never provide statements, criticisms, or arguments on technical matters that are inspired or funded by interested parties, unless they identify the interested parties and reveal their interest level
13. Disclose all conflicts of interest
14. Only accept compensation from one party per project, unless previously agreed by all parties involved
15. Never seek or accept financial consideration from outside agents
16. If in public service, never participate in decisions related to their services
17. Never seek or accept a contract from a governmental body in which an individual from their organization serves as a member
18. Provide correct qualifications and never allow misrepresentation of their associates' qualifications
19. Accurately represent their involvement in past assignments (for example, brochures shall contain true facts about employers, employees, and their past accomplishments)
20. Never offer, give, or receive any contribution to influence the award of a contract by public authority
21. Never offer a gift or commission to secure work

### **Section 3 Professional Obligations**

1. Engineers shall be guided by the highest level of honesty and integrity:
  - a. Admit when errors are made and never change the facts.
  - b. Share with their employers and clients when they feel that a project will not be successful.
  - c. Never accept outside employment that interferes with their ability to do their regular work. If they choose to accept outside employment, they shall notify their employer in advance.
  - d. Never attempt to lure engineers from another employer.
  - e. Never promote their personal interests if it takes away from their profession's integrity.
  - f. Treat everyone with dignity, respect, fairness, and equality.
2. Engineers shall work to serve the public interest:

- a. Help with civic affairs, provide the youth with career guidance, and work on making their community a safer and healthier place.
  - b. Only complete, sign, or seal plans that are in accordance with engineering standards.
  - c. Share their knowledge with the public and show their appreciation of engineering and its accomplishments.
  - d. Protect their environments for the generations to come.
  - e. Participate in ongoing professional development.
3. Engineers shall not mislead the public:
  - a. Avoid using statements that show misrepresentation or omission.
  - b. Never mislead when advertising to recruit personnel.
  - c. Never take credit for work performed by others when preparing articles for the press.
4. Engineers shall not, without consent, reveal confidential information on business affairs.
  - a. Never promote or arrange for new employment in relation to a specific project without consent of all interested parties.
  - b. Never engage in or show an opposing viewpoint in relation to a specific project without consent of all interested parties.
5. Engineers shall not let conflicting interests influence them.
  - a. Never accept incentives from suppliers in exchange for specifying the supplier's product.
  - b. Never accept commissions or allowances, directly or indirectly, when partaking in their professional duties.
6. Engineers shall not try to get hired or promoted by using improper methods:
  - a. Never request or accept a commission in situations where he/she may have compromised judgement.
  - b. For salaried employees, only accept part-time engineering work if they are in accordance with the employer's policies and ethics.
  - c. Never use equipment and supplies to complete outside work, without consent of all interested parties.
7. Engineers shall not try to ruin the reputation or employment of other engineers:
  - a. For those working in a private practice, never review the work of another engineer for the same client unless the other engineer is aware of the situation.
  - b. For those working in governmental, industrial, or educational employments, they are allowed to review the work of other engineers.
  - c. For those working in sales or industrial employments, they are allowed to make engineering comparisons of products.
8. Engineers shall take personal responsibility for their professional actions:

- a. Follow state engineering laws.
  - b. Never use their associations with non-engineers, corporations, or partnerships as a cover up for their unethical acts.
9. Engineers shall give credit for engineering work to those who deserve the credit:
- a. Cite the individual(s) who completed the designs, inventions, writings, or other accomplishments.
  - b. If using a design supplied by a client, never duplicate the design for use by others without getting permission from the client first.
  - c. Before starting work involving improvements, plans, designs, or inventions, engineers should enter into a positive agreement regarding ownership.
  - d. Engineers' designs, data, records, and notes referring exclusively to an employer's work are the employer's property.

By adhering to these ethical standards, engineers can ensure that their profession is conducted with integrity, fairness, and accountability.